

MIGRATORY BIRD SPECIALIST REPORT FOR THE ASHLEY NF ASPEN RESTORATION PROJECT

US F&WS Birds of Conservation Concern and Utah Partners in Flight Priority Species (Migratory Birds)

The Memorandum of Understanding of December 8, 2008 between the USDA Forest Service and USDI Fish and Wildlife Service to promote the conservation of migratory birds, provides direction for managing migratory birds. This direction includes evaluating the effects of agency actions on migratory birds, focusing on species of management concern along with their priority habitats and key risk factors. The MOU furthers directs to the extent practicable: evaluate and balance long-term benefits of projects against any short- or long-term adverse effects when analyzing, disclosing, and mitigating the effects of actions; pursue opportunities to restore or enhance migratory bird habitat in the project area; and consider approaches, to the extent practicable, for identifying and minimizing take that is incidental to otherwise lawful activities. (USDA Forest Service 2008)

The Utah Partners in Flight (PIF) working group recently completed a statewide avian conservation strategy (Parrish, Howe and Norvell 2002). The strategy identifies “priority species” for conservation due to declining abundance or distribution, or vulnerability to various local and/or range-wide risk factors. This list of priority bird species is intended to be used as a tool by federal and state agencies in prioritizing bird species that should be considered for conservation action” (Parrish, Howe and Norvell 2002). One application of the strategy and priority list is to give these birds specific consideration when analyzing effects of proposed management actions, and to implement the recommended conservation measures where appropriate.

Several of the species on the Birds of Conservation Concern and Priority Species lists occur or have habitats within or near the project area. These species are the golden eagle, three-toed woodpecker, flammulated owl, and Cassin’s finch. The three-toed woodpecker and flammulated owl are a sensitive species and are discussed in detail in the Biological Evaluation for this project. The Cassin’s finch is commonly associated with coniferous forests and less commonly associated with aspen. Aspen is habitat for some prey species of the golden eagle.

The project may initially modify habitat for the Cassin’s finch and prey species for the golden eagle, however the aspen projects will occur in designated areas of aspen over a number of years and would not occur all at once during one year. Thus there would only be a given amount of habitat affected in any given year. Additionally, there may be some initial affects to habitat in treated areas of aspen, but the treatments would improve aspen habitat over time, and thus improve habitat for the Cassin’s finch and golden eagle prey species as well as other wildlife species associated with aspen, including Ashley NF MIS (warbling vireo, red-naped sapsucker, elk, and mule deer).

If treatments are implemented after July, then there would be no effects to nesting Cassin's finch. If treatments are conducted in the spring and early summer, then noise from implementation of the project may displace some Cassin's finch from the immediate area or cause nest abandonment. In this event, individuals may either re-nest in an area removed from such disturbances during the same season (if abandonment occurred early enough into the nesting season) or abandon the nest and re-nest the following year. If the nest was abandoned or lost, the reduction of several nests would not be enough to cause a decline in migratory bird species as a whole. Thus, effects from treatments are likely negligible to Cassin's finch and other aspen obligate migratory birds (e.g. warbling vireo and red-naped sapsucker) as a whole.

Based on the above rationale and the mitigations below, it is determined that implementation of the treatments may impact individuals, but would not adversely affect these species populations (Cassin's finch and golden eagle) as a whole.

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US Fish & Wildlife Service list of Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) in Bird Conservation Regions 10 & 16, and Utah Partners in Flight (PIF) Priority Species - their status in the project area (Ashley NF Aspen Restoration Project).

| Species | BCR 16 | BCR 10 | PIF | Occurrence in Project Area | Basis for Occurrence Determination |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-----|----------------------------|---|
| American Avocet | X | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Bald Eagle | X | X | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Black Rosy-Finch | X | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Black-necked Stilt | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Black-throated Gray Warbler | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Brewer's Sparrow | X | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Broad-tailed Hummingbird | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Brown-capped Rosy Finch | X | | | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Burrowing Owl | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Calliope Hummingbird | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Cassin's Finch | X | X | | Present | Habitat is within the project area. |
| Flammulated Owl | X | X | | Present | Habitat is within the project area. |
| Golden Eagle | X | | | Present | Prey species habitat is within the project area. |
| Grasshopper Sparrow | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Greater Sage-Grouse | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Juniper Titmouse | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | X | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Loggerhead Shrike | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Peregrine Falcon | X | X | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |

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| Pinyon Jay | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Prairie Falcon | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Sage Sparrow | | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Sage Thrasher | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Three-toed Woodpecker | | | X | Present | Habitat is near the project area. |
| Veery | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Virginia's Warbler | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Williamson's Sapsucker | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Willow Flycatcher | X | X | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| American White Pelican | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Black Swift | | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Bobolink | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Ferruginous Hawk | X | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Gray Vireo | X | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Long-billed Curlew | X | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| McCown's Longspur | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Mountain Plover | X | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Snowy Plover | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Swainson's Hawk | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10. |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo | X | X | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Abert's Towhee | | | X | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Bell's Vireo | | | X | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Bendire's Thrasher | X | | | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Chestnut-collared Longspur | X | | | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Gambel's Quail | | | X | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Grace's Warbler | X | | | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Gunnison Sage-Grouse | X | | X | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Lucy's Warbler | | | X | Absent | Project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| Sharp-tailed Grouse | | | X | Absent | No suitable habitat exists in the project area. |
| Upland Sandpiper | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10 and project area is outside known distribution of this species. |
| White-headed Woodpecker | | X | | Not Applicable | Project is not within BCR 10 and project area is outside known distribution of this species. |

2008 Birds of Conservation Concern List & 2002 PIF Priority Species List

Habitats associated with US Fish & Wildlife Service list of Birds of Conservation Concern in Bird Conservation Regions 10 & 16, and Utah Partners in Flight Priority Species.

| Species | Habitat Description |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American Avocet | Occurs in shallow wetlands. |
| Bald Eagle | Occurs in close proximity to large ice free bodies of water. |
| Black Rosy-Finch | Occurs in alpine areas near snow banks in summer. |
| Black-necked Stilt | Occurs in shallow wetlands (e.g. Henry's Fork). |
| Black-throated Gray Warbler | Occurs in Pinon/Juniper, and brushlands. |
| Brewer's Sparrow | Occurs in sage flats, desert scrub, and dry brushy montane meadows. |

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| Broad-tailed Hummingbird | Occurs in mountain riparian. |
| Brown-capped Rosy Finch | Does not occur in Utah |
| Burrowing Owl | Occurs in open country - grasslands, prairies, and desert. |
| Calliope Hummingbird | Open montane forest, mountain meadows, willow and alder thickets. |
| Cassin's Finch | Open coniferous forest and sometimes aspen. |
| Flammulated Owl | Occurs in ponderosa pine/Douglas fir. |
| Golden Eagle | Occurs in open, hilly or cliffy country. |
| Grasshopper Sparrow | Occurs in grasslands, pasture lands, agriculture fields. |
| Greater Sage-Grouse | Occurs in sagebrush habitats. |
| Juniper Titmouse | Occurs in pinyon/juniper woodlands. |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | Occurs in open forests, especially ponderosa, cottonwood; likes burned areas. |
| Loggerhead Shrike | Occurs in low elevational shrub/scrub habitats. |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher | Occurs in forest and woodland habitats; coniferous and mixed coniferous-deciduous. |
| Peregrine Falcon | Occurs in open areas with cliffs and water (canyons). |
| Pinyon Jay | Occurs in pinon/juniper and ponderosa in foothills/lower mountains. |
| Prairie Falcon | Occurs in open cliffy country, foothills, and canyons. |
| Sage Sparrow | Occurs in sage flats and desert scrub. |
| Sage Thrasher | Occurs in sagebrush plains, arid or semi-arid areas. |
| Three-toed Woodpecker | Occurs in coniferous forests. |
| Veery | Occurs in swampy forest with understory; large tracts of forest. |
| Virginia's Warbler | Occurs in PJ, ponderosa, and scrub habitats. |
| Williamson's Sapsucker | Occurs in open, dry coniferous forests; spruce/pine/fir and aspen. |
| Willow Flycatcher | Occurs in brushy areas of willow and thickets. |
| American White Pelican | Occurs in wetlands. |
| Black Swift | Occurs and nests in waterfalls in coniferous forests. |
| Bobolink | Occurs in grasslands and fields. |
| Ferruginous Hawk | Occurs in open and arid habitats. |
| Gray Vireo | Occurs in dry, brushy areas; PJ woodlands. |
| Long-billed Curlew | Occurs in wet and dry grassy uplands; fields. |
| McCown's Longspur | Occurs in open habitats; short-grass prairie and low fields. |
| Mountain Plover | Occurs in dry, upland short-grass prairie; semi-desert. |
| Snowy Plover | Occurs in mudflats and shores of salt ponds/alkaline lakes |
| Swainson's Hawk | Occurs in open, arid habitats, and fields. |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo | Occurs in cottonwoods/riparian. |
| Abert's Towhee | Within Utah, but only occurs in SW Utah |
| Bell's Vireo | Occurs in Utah, but only SW Utah. |
| Bendire's Thrasher | Occurs in Utah, but only Southern Utah. |
| Chestnut-collared Longspur | Occurs in short grass uplands, drier habitats, and moist lowlands. |
| Gambel's Quail | Occurs in Utah, but only southern Utah. |
| Grace's Warbler | Occurs in Utah, but only southern Utah. |
| Gunnison Sage-Grouse | Occurs in Utah, but restricted to SE Utah. |
| Lucy's Warbler | Occurs in Utah, but only SW Utah. |
| Sharp-tailed Grouse | Occurs in sagebrush steppe, riparian mountain shrub, and oak scrub. |
| Upland Sandpiper | Does not occur in Utah. |
| White-headed Woodpecker | Does not occur in Utah. |